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AUTHOR James, Dixie Howse
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ABSTRACT

The ethnic diversity and gender represented and the age of the collection of middle level biography collections of one middle school library media center and one public library serving the same community were studied. Shelflists and computer printouts, as well as the books themselves, were used to provide information about the biography collections. The school had a total collection of about 13,500 volumes with 984 biographies covering 665 different subjects. The public library children's department had 614 biographies, with 457 persons represented. Biographies of males outnumbered those of females by about four to one in both collections. The percentages of biographies of Whites exceeded the percentage of White students in both cases. The percentage of biographies of Blacks was 14 to 18 percent under the percentage of Black students, but the percentage of biographies of Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and others was within one percent of the corresponding ethnic student population. The average age of the collection in both libraries was over 20 years. In both collections, the largest number of books had a copyright date in the 1960s. Neither collection was adequate or equitable with regard to gender. Ethnic groups classified as White or Black are not equitably represented, although other ethnic groups are proportionately represented. Seven tables present study data. (Contains 22 references.) (SLD)

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ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND GENDER IN THE MIDDLE LEVEL BIOGRAPHY COLLECTION

BY

DIXIE HOWSE JAMES

A SCHOLARLY STUDY

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for
the Degree of Specialist in Education in Library
Media Technology in the Department
of Curriculum and Instruction
in the College of Education
Georgia State University

Atlanta, Georgia

1993

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ABSTRACT

ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND GENDER

IN THE MIDDLE LEVEL BIOGRAPHY COLLECTION

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Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine ethnic diversity, gender, and age of the middle level biography collections in one middle school library media center and one public library serving the same community.

Methods and Procedures

Research was done on-site at each of the two locations studied. Data collection was accomplished with shelflists and computer printouts. Books were handled and reference sources consulted when additional information was needed. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the data.

Results

Major findings included:

1. Male biographies outnumbered female biographies about four to one at both locations.

2. The percentage of white biographies exceeded the percentage of white students. The percentage of black biographies was 14% to18% under the percentage of black students. The percentage of Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and Other biographies was within 1% of the corresponding ethnic student population.

3. The average age of the collection in both locations was over twenty years old. When sorted by decades the largest number of books in both locations had a 1960's copyright date.

Conclusions

The biography collections studied are not adequate or equitable in regard to gender. Regarding ethnic diversity, the ethnic groups classified as white and black are not adequately or equitably represented in these collections. When examining the percentages, the remaining ethnic groups appear to be proportionately represented. When averaged, both collections are over twenty years old.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Bob Dylan wrote that "the times, they are a-chinging' " (Bessant, 1992, p.28). Mathews, Flum and Whitney (1990) declared that " social, demographic and economic shifts of the past decade have intensified the rate of that change. Youth today face many challenges as the twenty-first century approaches" (p. 199). Two major areas of change involve the role of women in society and the increase of minorities in the population.

Mathews, Flum and Whitney (1991) wrote that "the growth and augmentation of the nation's libraries and information services are essential if all Americans, without regard to race, ethnic background or geographical location are to have reasonable access to adequate information and lifelong learning. School and public libraries when adequately equipped to do the job, can be a powerful catalyst in a young person's life" (p. 199). The school library media program will play an increasingly important role in the education of America's children

serving as a clearing house for the changing forms of communication and the rapid advances in technology. The school library media specialist must become the change agent anticipating trends and forging a trail to lead students through the "information explosion" and preparing them to live in the "new world order." Close cooperation with the people who serve children in the public library will strengthen this effort (Bessant, 1992).

"Merging Cultures through Media" was the theme of the FAME conference in Tampa, Florida, in 1992 (Meckstroth, 1992). The literature seems to suggest that media and books in particular are vitally important in the challenges facing education. Multicultural education, cultural literacy and self-esteem are areas where the gaps can be filled with the innovative use of books, the use of the biography format.

Kaycee Hale grew up in rural "West-by-God Virginia" and became the the executive director of the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising Museum and Library Foundation. She reveals to Dwight McInvaill (1991) of Neuse Regional Library in Kinston, North Carolina, that her life was changed by a lady named Maude Roby who brought the bookmobile to the rural home of a small black girl and introduced her to the world of reading.

The messenger continues to be as important as the message!

Melvin De Gree (1992), an author who grew up in Shelby, North Carolina, amid segregation, was motivated by reading stories about famous African Americans who overcame damnable odds. Men such as Benjamin E. Mays and Booker T. Washington touched his life through books.

Thomas Carlyle (cited in Mueller, 1991) wrote that "no great man lives in vain. The history of the world is but the biography of great men (p. 55).

And might women be added, Tom? Of course, history is more than biography, but what better way to meet the truly fascinating people who have made history what it is? Educators are all too aware that students lack knowledge of and interest in history. Could it be that too few lives of real people ever come to life on the pages of books available to children and middle level students in particular (Mueller, 1991)?

Clarke and Fifft (1991) say that "Henry Louis Gates, Jr. wants W. E. B. Dubois, Wole Soyinka, and Phillis Wheatley on the nation's reading lists, as well as western classics like Milton and Shakespeare" (p. 16).

A study done by Harvey-Slager (1992) with four elementary schools in

Texas revealed that neither the number of books nor the quality of writing was adequate to serve the needs of the population studied in regard to gender and ethnic origin. Topics such as race and gender are priority issues on educational agendas. This study deserves replication in order to obtain data concerning biographies in relation to ethnic diversity and gender on the middle school level in other geographical locations. Collection currency, weeding, selection, and collection development are areas that must keep pace with the changing demographics of schools.

A recent study commissioned by the American Association of University Women, "How Schools Shortchange Girls" (cited in DeCandito and Mahony, 1992), reports that "the educational system is not meeting the girls' needs" (p. 10). According to the AAUW report (cited in DeCandido and Mahony, 1992), "what is evaded in the curriculum is the female experience" (p. 10). Could biographies help fill this gap?

As a result of the information gathered thus far, it is apparent that media specialists need to know what the biography collections hold regarding women, minorities and ethnic groups, thus opening a new window on collection development and restructuring of the curriculum as

education moves in the direction of whole language and resource based teaching.

Statement of the Problem

Are the ethnic diversity and the gender of the school population represented in available biography collections? The purpose of this study was to examine the biography collections of one middle school and one public library serving the same community.

Several research questions were considered.

1. Is the biography collection adequate and equitable in providing male and female biographies in proportionate ratio to the male and female student population?
2. Is the biography collection ethnically adequate and equitable in providing multicultural diversity in proportion to the percentage of ethnic groups in the student population?
3. What is the age of the biography collection?

Significance of the Study

The literature suggests that providing a biography collection representative of a student population, both in gender and culture, will positively affect that population. Assuming that this is true, the results of this study can reveal strengths and weaknesses of the local biography collections. This study was conducted to compliment and to replicate in part a study done by Harvey-Slager (1992) in Texas. A comparison of the two studies could help to establish criteria for weeding and building biography collections for elementary and middle level students, as well as to elevate the importance of the biography format in curriculum development.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to surveying the biography collections of one middle school and one public library in Cobb County, Georgia, serving the same middle level population.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions clarify the terms used in the study:

Middle level: The educational step between elementary school and

high school that focuses on the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades.

Multicultural education: Promoting greater tolerance, understanding and appreciation of different cultures as issues of race, ethnicity, culture, history and gender are addressed.

Ethnic: Having to do with the various races of people and the characteristics and customs of each.

Minority: A group within a country or state that differs in race, religion, or national origin from the dominant group.

Culture: The customs, arts and conveniences of a nation or race.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Is the ethnicity and gender of the school population represented in the biography collection? The literature was reviewed with emphasis on the issue of providing materials to meet the needs of the changing school demographics with particular focus on the biography format. The educational agenda of the nineties and beyond include the issues of race, ethnicity, culture, history and gender, as well as the more traditional ongoing problems of funding, space and organization. We must accept and deal with the age of multicultural education (Bruder, 1992).

A Look Back

Almost since its inception, the United States has been embroiled in debate over the proper roles of schools and the best methods of achieving quality education. The good results of one reform effort have almost inevitably led to a period of discontent, as national priorities shifted. Today's crusade to improve public education is but the latest chapter.

The first battle--to establish universal public education--was waged in the mid-1800's by Massachusett's Horace Mann. As a result of this campaign, a patchwork of local schools was replaced by statewide educational systems throughout the country (Toch and Cooper, 1990, p. 55).

Ruth Ann Davies (cited in Barron and Bergen, 1992) wrote that "in 1839 Horace Mann admonished educators to establish school libraries to compensate for the informational limitations of the textbook" (p. 522).

Following the emergence of a national system of free public high schools in the late 1800's, a group led by Harvard President Charles Eliot urged the establishment of a heavily academic core curriculum. This approach prevailed for two decades; only the best students were affected, however, since less than 10 percent of the nation's children finished high school in 1900. Child-labor laws and an influx of immigrants soon expanded the number and range of students entering public schools. The new pool of students gave rise to a movement called "progressivism," led by John Dewey, who argued that curricula needed to reflect the increasing diversity of student bodies. As a

result, courses in woodworking, homemaking and other "utilitarian" subjects were introduced.

Progressivism remained a dominant force into the 1950's, when the launch of Sputnik jolted educators into re-emphasizing academics, especially math and sciences. These priorities gave way in the early 1960's to the civil-rights movement, which dramatically increased the educational opportunities of the non-English-speaking, the handicapped, women and blacks. In the 1990's, the focus is once again on rigorous academic standards, this time for all students, largely in the name of international economic competitiveness (Toch and Cooper, 1990, p. 55).

Demographics of Change

The United States has always had a diverse population. This diversity has historically been and remains one of the great strengths of this country. However, the ethnic and minority populations are increasing at a much more rapid pace than in the past. This presents an important challenge to the American educational community: to educate all students with special attention to that segment of the school population that has

"fallen through the cracks" of our present system (Bruder, 1992).

While it is true that the call for recognition of cultural diversity represents the same kind of need for justice as was seen in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's, the shear numbers of these multicultural immigrants create an imposing problem for our educational system that must be addressed without delay. Immigrants from Europe represented the largest portion of people entering the United States prior to the 1960's. These people, for obvious reasons, were assimilated into mainstream American life with much less difficulty than the immigrants from Asia and Hispanic countries during the last decade (Bruder, 1992). Bruder (1992) writes that " by the year 2050, descendants of the "new " immigrants--non-whites--are expected to represent 40 percent of the country's population" (p. 20). The National Center for Education Statistics' Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Survey (cited in Bruder, 1992), reports that during the decade between 1978 and 1988 our population of Asian and Hispanic students doubled while there was a decline in the white, non-Hispanic and black student population with no significant change in the numbers of American Indians and Alaskans.

According to Al Tony of the National Education Association, larger percentages of minorities are attending puplic school; birth rates are highest in the non-white community; non-white students generally show lower academic scores and higher drop-out rates. Research by Schuster used in Bruder's article stresses the need to act in the area of multicultural education. The school systems serving twenty-seven of the largest cities in the United States all have a majority population of minorities except one. During the 1990's statistics will show that one-third of all students entering the work force from school will be minorities (Bruder, 1992).

Spotlighted in the world of academics is ethnic diversity and multicultural education. Embedded in these concerns for adequate education of minority groups is the problem of neglecting cultural literacy in the curriculum of American students regardless of ethnic backgrounds. New criticisms are being leveled as more and more studies and tests such as "What Every American Should Know" published in 1987 (cited in Balch, 1991) show that these students are unaware of their own cultural and historical background. Results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress report (cited in Balch, 1991) published in People Weekly in

1987, stated that "66 percent of our high school students did not know when the Civil War occurred and that 50 percent of these teenagers could not identify Stalin or Churchill" (p. 38). As demographics shift and student populations change, knowledge of the traditional "American heritage" will decline (Balch, 1991). The United States cannot afford to allow this trend to continue.

Gender Equity

Closely tied to the challenge of multicultural education is the issue of gender equity. Butler and Sperry (1991) writing in the Middle School Journal concerning gender issues expressed the following:

> At a time when middle school educators begin to reconceptualize the curriculum for the middle years, educators cannot afford to shrink from looking closely at the impact of the current curriculum, as well as upon the suggestions for reforming it, with an eye to the effect of curriculum and instruction on the different genders (p. 18).

An article appearing in 1990 in the NASSP Bulletin (cited in Butler and Sperry, 1991) entitled, " Are schools responding to females?" reads:

> Despite the advances made in the last 30 years, our schools are still primarily oriented toward the white male student. Research indicates that schools and teachers (both males and females), are still more responsive to boys, their learning styles, their needs, their futures, than they are to female students (p. 18).

While science and math curriculum materials are admittedly focused on males, it should be noted that materials used in the language arts and social studies classes have made slow progress in including works by or about women, especially women of color. Curriculum reformers such as Beane, Arnold and Stevenson (cited in Butler and Sperry, 1991), suggest that middle level curriculum being used in some areas may very well worsen the problems encountered by females in the in-between-years.

The American Association of University Women's recent report on gender bias in schools, "Restructuring education", (cited in Butler and Sperry, 1991) calls for an entire restructuring of schools to support gender equity. This report recommends the use of a "literature, history, and social studies curricula that reflect the pluralistic and multicultural context of

American society and show women and minorities as doers, leaders, and decision-makers rather than as helpers or victims" (p.21). A recent study commissioned by the American Association of University Women, "How Schools Shortchange Girls" (cited in DeCandido and Mahony, 1992), reveals that "the educational system is not meeting the needs of girls" (p 10). One female high school student indicated that she had never studied anything about herself. The flaw seems to be in a school curricula that often in subtle ways delivers the messaage that "women's lives count for less than men's" (DeCandido and Mahony, 1992, p. 10). It is interesting to note that the first national AAUW study was commissioned in 1885 to dispel the 19th century myth that higher education was harmful to the health of women. Perhaps this study will help dispel the myth that girls and boys are educated equally (DeCandido and Mahony, 1992).

And what is the role of the library media specialist in all this controversy? Robin Berson (cited in DeCandido and Mahony, 1992) charges the library media specialist with sharing the responsibility of developing the character and quality of the education being delivered in a given school. The media specialist deals directly with the students on an

individual basis, develops the holdings of the library collection and in the emerging role of curriculum consultant can significantly impact curriculum development.

As early as 1926 Arthur Jordan (cited in Harvey-Slager, 1992) indentified children's preferences for reading books with the central character being the same gender as themselves. Yet, even a casual observation of the collections of both school and public libraries reveal an uneven distribution of male and female biographies as related to the student population being served (Harvey-Slager, 1992). LaBounty (1992) confirms, with computerized circulation records, the fact that male names are more frequently seem on book covers than are female names. Research also shows that, contrary to popular belief, when male-derived generic terms are used, people do not conjure up mental images of females (LaBounty, 1992).

The lack of female role models has been perpetuated in children's literature. Studies by Williams in 1987 and Kinman and Henderson in 1985 (cited in Harvery-Slager, 1992) reveal a sexual bias in favor of males even in the books that have received the Caldecott and Newberry Award.

All libraries own and promote these books as "must" reading for children.

What the literature seems to suggest regarding the issue of gender gap in materials offered in the school curricula is that educators must make a conscious effort to include female experiences at all levels and most particularly in the middle grades for it is here that it seems to matter the most.

Self-esteem

Inherent in the discussion of gender equity is the issue of female self-esteem. Bower (1991) asks the question, "does adolescence herald the twilight of girls' self-esteem" (p. 184)? It is an accepted fact that children often experience a decline in self-esteem during the transition years of middle level education. Over the last twenty years research has documented this decline, often more pronounced in female students (Harvey-Slager, 1992). A survey released by AAUW in January 1991 (cited in Bower, 1991) suggests the following:

> Adolescent girls experience genuine, substantial drops in self-esteem that far outpace those reported by boys. Girls also reported much less enthusiasm for math and science,

less confidence in their academic abilities and fewer aspirations to professional careers (p. 184).

Nancy Goldberger (cited in Bower, 1991), a psychologist adviser involved in the AAUW survey, is quoted as saying that "something is going on in the schools that threatens the self-esteem of girls in general" (p. 184). It was noted that there is controversy among social scientists as to the extent of the drop in self-esteem during adolescence. Some researchers doubt that any significant gender gap in self-esteem exists at all (Bower, 1991). According to Adelson (cited in Bower, 1991) the self-esteem studies could be skewed. If the data show females to be more sensitive and aware of emotions then it could follow that they are more willing to report personal feelings even if they are negative feelings, thus creating incorrect interpretations of survey data. Another study appearing in the February Journal of Youth and Adolescence (cited in Bower, 1991) also shows views conflicting with the AAUW survey. While the gender bias question will not disappear, Simmons (cited in Bower, 1991) observes that "most kids come through the years from 10 to 20 without major problems and with an increasing sense of self-esteem" (p. 186).

A class action suit involving eight black families in New York charged that the absence of multicultural curricula materials produces a lack of self-esteem and self-worth among students that translates to poor academic performance, high dropout rates and even crime (Tifft, 1990).

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (cited in Tifft, 1990) charges that the self-esteem issue is a "red herring." He sights the exceptionally high academic performance of Asian Americans who have very few role models in our history books.

Over and over the literature indicates that the family and school have the most direct involvement with the student and, therefore, have the best opportunity to positively impact the problem of falling self-esteem. The school being a strong link in this chain of home, student and school must strive to provide more support (Harvey-Slager, 1992).

The Biography Connection

Oliver Sacks writes in The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat (cited in Dickinson, 1991) the following:

> If we wish to know about a man, we ask 'what is his story--his real, inmost story?'--for each of us is a biography, a story. Each

> of us is a singular narrative, which is constructed, continually, unconsciously, by through and in us--through our perceptions, our feelings, our thoughts, our actions; and not least our discourse, our spoken narrations. Biologically, physiologically, we are not so different from each other; historically, as narratives--we are each of us unique (p. 47).

Amid the turmoil of academic issues and the stress of daily tasks, teachers and media specialists would do well to focus on the idea that this singularity written about by Sacks must not be ignored and never lost. Individual classrooms filled with individual students and taught by individual teachers are the vehicle used to fashion our communities, our states, and our nation. These individual narratives are woven together into a fabric made stronger by our individual threads (Dickinson, 1991).

The Maine Department of Education in June of 1990 offered a seminar titled, "A Women's Place Is in the Curriculum, A Multicultural Approach to Women's History." The focus was on innovative ways to integrate women's history into existing curricula. One technique recommended was teaching about individual women who have made important contributions to their

times. This technique creates a need for available sources of information about women (Greely, 1992). Biographies and collective biographies are the format of choice for this task.

Mueller (1991) writing in the School Library Journal makes the point that more emphasis should be placed on history makers as we attempt to intergrate women and minorities into the curriculum. A look at real people with all their mistakes, contradictions and fascinating traits gives young people a more complete picture of historical events. The author stresses that the quality of biographies has improved as society and historical scholarship have changed. Biographies can make the interesting people of history live in our minds. It is imperative that a larger number of these books about history makers include women. History may be more than biography, but increased use of this format could be a welcome addition to the curriculum.

Using biographies in student research projects is an excellent connecting point between media center and classroom. Projects of this sort allow for the integrated teaching of information access skills and encourages cooperation between the media specialist and the classroom teacher while

allowing the student to choose a character that could build self-esteem (Mueller, 1991).

Mueller (1991) sees an opportunity for two professionals working together to make stimulating things happen in the classroom. When this happens, it is then that "the curriculum ceases to exist as a document and becomes the core of an exciting educational experience" (p. 148).

Styer (cited in Harvey-Slager, 1992) encourages the use of women's biographies as incentives for girls to broaden their interests. Women who pursue non-traditional roles can provide models for girls searching for their identity. Strong women role models can be found in folklore and fiction, but biography is an important genre in dealing with young females (Harvey-Slager, 1992).

Berson (1992) urges educators to brave the "road less taken" in her response to Mueller's article. Media specialists are admonished to include biographies of ordinary people in the collection. Berson (1992) writes that "students need to learn something of how ordinary people--people like them--have faced the daily and occasionally momentous decisions of their lives" (p. 6). Losers rarely get to tell their stories. Those stories need to be

heard. The "other stories, the lost causes, the might-have-beens, the people who dreamed and tried but failed" have much to add to the lives of young people (Berson, 1992, p. 6).

Author Ann Cameron (1992) writes, "We forget that identity is not a box we are stuck in; it is the roots we grow from. We forget that identity is not only what we come from, it is what we reach toward" (p.29). To Ann Cameron books and the library building that held them provided a sense of security. From books this small girl was able to create inside herself a model for living that helped her survive (Cameron, 1992). The power of books is enormous!

Summary

A historical review of the literature shows that American education has always been in a state of flux. An emerging nation of necessity needed an emerging educational system. The rate of change has accelerated in this the last decade of the twenteth century, due to the rapidly multiplying numbers of non-white and non-European immigrants.

A literature search revealed two major positions regarding multicultural education in general. Those that have been called

"particularists" advocate the drawing of sharp lines between ethnic groups, each with its own specific curriculum. Those called "plurists" lean toward a common culture that will unify our children with an honest and fair curriculum that celebrates what we have in common as Americans (Leo, 1990). That is not to say that use of good biographies representative of a school's population would not transcend these philosophical ideas and touch the students in a positive way. Distinguishing between theory and practical everyday matters has always been a problem in education. One that all too often adversely affects the student.

In the matter of gender equity there seems to be a general agreement both from casual oberservation and formal studies that male role models are far more numerous than female role models in children's and young adult literature. There is also agreement that more female and minority biographies are needed in library collections of both school and public libraries.

Regarding the reported declining self-esteem of female and minority students in the middle grades, the literature suggested opposing viewpoints. One camp blames the lack of role models and multicultural

literature for poor academic performance, high dropout rates and antisocial behavior. On the other hand certain experts in the field believe that the role model/self-esteem issue is not connected. On the local level all possible techniques must be utilized to offset the very real problems facing our adolescent students.

The innovative use of the biography format is recommended in the literature. Adults of all backgrounds testify to the significant role played by books in their lives. The benefit of stories of people with which students can identify is well documented. Biographees used as research subjects are connecting points from the library to the classroom and from the media specialist to the classroom teacher. Improving collection development in the genre of biography and promoting the use of these materials is a worthwhile undertaking for both school and public libraries.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This was a descriptive study using a literature review to establish the background. Data was collected from shelflists and computer printouts. Books were handled and reference sources consulted when additional information was needed. Frequency counts, percentages and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data collected in the study. The purpose of the study was to examine the middle level biography collections in one middle school library media center and one public library in light of gender and ethnic diversity.

Population

This study was conducted in one middle school with a population of 935 students in the 6th, 7th and 8th grades along with one public library serving the same community. The student population using both the middle school library media center and the public library is multicultural and represents a broad spectrum of socioeconomic levels ranging from upper income professional families to families on government assistance programs.

The ethnic makeup of the middle school students included in this study in order of prevalence was white, black, Hispanic, Asian and other. The community referred to in the study is in a transitional area. An increase in the number of minority and ethnic students is expected. Both the media specialist at the middle school and the children's librarian at the public library have the flexibility to purchase material as the need arises within certain budget constraints.

The middle school is located in the southern part of the school district adjacent to a large urban area served by another school district. The ethnic breakdown of the 935 students is as follows: 617 are white; 260 are black; 31 are Hispanic; 22 are Asian; and 5 are classified as other. The ethnic diversity of the school population represented in percentages is as follows: 66 percent are white; 28 percent are black; 3 percent are Hispanic; 2 percent are Asian and 1 percent is classified as other. There are 453 male students and 482 female students enrolled. The population is 48 percent male and 52 percent female. Demographics regarding the student population served by the two biography collections studied were provided by the pupil personnel division of the county school system.

The middle school media center has a total collection of approximately 13, 500 volumes. The biography collection is comprised of 984 volumes with 665 different biographees represented. No circulation records for the biography format were available. The public library has the age-appropriate books for the middle school population classified under "juvenile" in the children's department. The juvenile biography collection totals 614 volumes with 457 different biographees represented. No circulation statistics for biographies were avaliable. The biography collections at both the middle school and the public library are available to the same student population.

Data Collection

Research was done on-site at each of the two locations studied. Using the shelflists and computer printouts available at both research sites, a count was made of the male and female biographies in the collections. Books were handled and Books in Print was consulted when added information was needed. Both individual biographies and collective biographies were used. Only biographies with appropriate reading levels for middle grade students were investigated at the public library.

Statistics were gathered regarding numbers of biographies representative of ethnic and minority groups present in the student population. Copyright dates were recorded to obtain information as to the age of the collections. Copyright information was categorized with regard to male and female biographies for comparison. If the gender of the biography was not apparent from the records used, the book was pulled from the shelf to gather the information.

The collective biographies were counted as female in the following cases: when women were the only subjects included in a particular volume; when the volume contained sufficient material of interest about a particular female to make it useful; when the volume contained material on women not found in the section for individual biographies. The use of these criteria made it necessary for the researcher to handle the majority of the collective biographies in order to validate the inclusion of the volume in the study.

The ethnic groups used for recording data from the collection were: white, black, Hispanic, native American, Asian, east Indian and Filipino. This data was later used for comparison of the biographies available to the

ethnic makeup of the student population involved in the study.

Data Analysis

Frequency tables, averages, and percentages were used to explain the collected data. The data was examined for practical results and usefulness, as well as the probability of generalization.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine ethnic diversity and gender in the middle level biography collections of two local libraries. This was a replication of a study done in another geographical location with the appropriate necessary changes. One middle school library media center and one public library serve the same middle school population. The literature suggests that providing a biography collection representative of a student population, both in gender and culture, will positively affect that population. Assuming that this is true, the results of this study can reveal strengths and weaknesses of the local biography collections.

The collections were surveyed to obtain data regarding: the number of female biographies in relation to the number of females in the school population; the number of male biographies in relation to the number of female biographies; the number of ethnic biographies in relation to the ethnic groups in the school population; and the currency of the collections.

Population

This study was conducted in one middle school with a population of 935 students in the 6th, 7th and 8th grades along with one public library serving the same community. The breakdown of the 935 students shows the number of males to be 453 or 48% of the population. Female students number 482 or 52% of the population. The student population using both the middle school library media center and the public library is multicultural and represents a broad spectrum of socioeconomic levels ranging from upper income professional families to familes on government assistance programs. Table 1 shows the population breakdown by gender.

Table 1

Student Population by Gender

(Actual Numbers and Percentages)

	Frequency	% of Total Population
Male	453	48%
Female	482	52%
Total	935	100%

The ethnic makeup of the middle school students included in this study in order of prevalence was white, black, Hispanic, Asian and other. The community referred to in the study is in a transitional area. An increase in the number of minority and ethnic students is expected. Both the media specialist at the middle school and the children's librarian at the public library have the flexibility to purchase material as the need arises within certain budget constraints.

Research Question 1

Is the biography collection adequate and equitable in providing male and female biographies in proportionate ratio to the male and female student population? The volumes in the biography collections at both the middle school media center and the public library were counted as either male or female. Only the "juvenile" biography collection was used at the public library. Collective biographies were counted at both locations under the conditions discussed in the Data Collection section of Chapter 3.

Table 2 shows the number of male and female biographies at both locations studied and the proportion of the collection represented by each.

Table 2

Male and Female Biographies Available by Location

(Actual Numbers and Percentages)

Location	Male Biographies	% of Total	Female Biographies	% of Total	Total Volumes
Middle School	792	80%	192	20%	984
Public Library	481	78%	133	22%	614
Total	1273	80%	325	20%	1598

Of the 935 students involved, 48% are male and 52% are female. At the middle school 80% of the biorgraphy volumes were classified as male and 20% classified as female--four times as many male biographies as female biographies with the female population being 4% greater than the male population. At the public library the picture is only slightly better, with 78% of the collection classified as male and 22% classified as female.

Research Question 2

Is the biography collection ethnically adequate and equitable in providing multicultural diversity in proportion to the percentage of ethnic groups in the student population? The ethnic groups used for recording data from the collections were: white, black, Hispanic, native American, Asian, east Indian and Filipino. Tables 3 and 4 show the collected data compared to the ethnic makeup of the student population.

Table 3

Ethnic Population and Biographies Available in the Middle School (Frequencies and Percentages)

Ethnic Group	Biography Volumes	% of Total	Student Population	% of Total
White	803	82%	617	66%
Black	101	10%	260	28%
Hispanic	26	3%	31	3%
Asian	20	2%	22	2%
Native American	25	3%	0	0%
Other	9	less than 1%	5	1%
Total	984	100%	935	100%

Table 4

Ethnic Population and Biographies Available at the Public Library

(Frequencies and Percentages)

Ethnic Group	Biography Volumes	% of Total	Student Population	% of Total
White	487	79%	617	66%
Black	82	14%	260	28%
Hispanic	13	2%	31	3%
Asian	7	1%	22	2%
Native American	19	3%	0	0%
Other	6	1%	5	1%
Total	614	100%	935	100%

Examination of the data shows that the percentage of the biographies representing the white segment of the population exceeds the percentage of whites in the group. Blacks are under represented by 18% in the middle school collection and by 14% in the public library collection. Hispanic and Asian library users appear adequately represented.

Research Question 3

What is the age of the biography collection? Tables 5, 6, and 7 define the currency of the collections in both locations investigated. The number of books with copyright dates falling in ten year spans is presented in the next two tables.

Table 5

Number of Copyright Dates by Decade and Gender

Middle School Media Center

Decade	Male	Female	Total
1930-39	3	1	4
1940-49	25	7	32
1950-59	161	25	186
1960-69	293	62	355
1970-79	204	58	262
1980-89	92	34	126
1990-92	14	5	19
Total	792	192	984

Recorded in Table 5 is the number of copyright dates counted in the middle school media center by decade and gender. According to this data, the number of books published in the 1960's and purchased for the middle school is the largest for both genders with the books purchased in the 1970's being the next largest total. Male biographies outnumber female biographies in both decades by almost five to one.

Table 6

Number of Copyright Dates by Decade and Gender

Public Library Juvenile Collection

Decade	Male	Female	Total
1930-39	7	0	7
1940-49	19	4	23
1950-59	57	13	70
1960-69	180	43	223
1970-79	155	51	206
1980-89	58	22	80
1990-92	5	0	5
Total	481	133	614

Table 6 shows the number of copyright dates counted at the public library and recorded by decade and gender. As in Table 5 the largest number of books in both the male and female catagory shows a 1960's copyright date followed by the 1970's. Again the male biographies outnumbered the female biographies by about four to one in the decade of the 60's and three to one in the 70's.

Table 7

Average Copyright Date of Biographies by Gender and Location

Location	Male	Female
Middle School Media Center	1972	1968
Public Library Juvenile Collection	1968	1970
Average	1970	1969

In the middle school collection the male biographies were four years newer than the female volumes. The reverse was true at the public library with the female biographies being two years more recent than the male collection. When averages were taken from the two locations, the male biographies were only one year older than the female. The average age of the biographies in both collections investigated is over twenty years old!

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Findings

The following conclusions were drawn in answer to the research questions set forth in this study.

* The biography collection is not adequate or equitable in providing male and female biographies in proportion to the male and female student population.
* The biography collection is not ethnically adequate or equitable in providing multicultural diversity in proportion to the percentage of of the two largest groups represented. The four groups falling in the lowest percentages seem to be adequately and equitably represented.
* The largest number of the biographies were published in the decade of the 60's with the second largest number published in the 70's. The average age of the entire collection is more than twenty years.

Discussion

Do the collections studied provide sufficient numbers of women's biographies for the numbers of middle school female students served? The answer is no! There are 482 female students in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade. Volumes classified as female number only 192 in the middle school collection and 133 in the public library. Even if the two collections were added together there would still not be one book per female student. Female students represent 52% of the total population, but only 20% of the biographies at the middle school and 22% of the public library collection are classified as female. This is considerably less than half the volumes needed to make the percentages of female students and female biographies equal at both locations.

Do the collections studied provide equitable numbers of male and female biographies in proportion to the male and female population served? Again the answer is no! To be considered equitable, the number of male and female biographies held in a collection should be roughly equivalent to the number of males and females in the population. The 453 males in the student population represent 48% of the total while the 482 females represent 52%. At the middle school 80% of the biographies are

classified as male and 20% are classified as female. The collection contains four times as many male volumes as female volumes with the female population being 4% greater than the male population. At the public library the picture is only sightly better, with 78% of the collection being classified as male and 22% classfied as female.

The ethnic groups are not equitably represented. Whites are over represented at both locations studied. The public library has 79% of the collection falling in the white category with only 66% of the population being white. That is a 13% over representation. The middle school has 82% of the collection falling in the category of white with only 66% of the population being white. That is a 16% over representation.

The black students are under represented in both locations with the public library holding only 14% and the middle school only 10% of the biography collection in the black category. The population is 28% black. That is 14% and 18% under representation respectively. To be considered equitable, the assumption is that the percentage of biographies in a collection representing a particular ethnic group should be roughly equal to the percentage of students in the population representing the same ethnic group.

The remaining groups: Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and Other appear to be represented in proportion to the numbers in the population. An examination of the biographees representing these small populations revealed that the majority were historical and very few contemporary. It should, also, be noted that with such small numbers of students falling in each of these groups, the number of biographies for each segment of this population could occur by chance.

Statistics from Harvey-Slager's (1992) study done in Texas showed whites and blacks over represented and Hispanics under represented. The current study has shown whites over represented, blacks under represented with Hispanics in an equitable position. The Hispanic population in Harvey-Slager's (1992) study would be the minority second from the top in the general population. In this current study the blacks would be the population second from the top in the general population. These two studies agree, then, in the area of under representing the minority that more closely rivals the majority population. One explanation for this could be that the minority group with the largest numbers in a given area falls into a catagory that is the recipient of more prejudice while

the ethnic groups of fewer numbers hold a more charitable position in the eyes of the majority population. Could prejudice play a major role in the purchasing, as well as the publishing of biographies both in the area of women and minority groups?

Other factors to be considered which could explain the lack of ethnic equity include the lack of minority biographies available for purchase during the years in which the bulk of the purchasing was done to build these collections. The move toward cultural diversity and multiculturalism, as well as the move to recognize the contributions of women is very recent in the historical spectrum of education.

The average age of both collections is over twenty years. If biographies are to be a significant component in curriculum development, the collection must be kept current. The decades of the 60's and the 70's showed the largest number of copyright dates in both locations studied. This is a time period that several studies have shown to contain considerable gender bias. A number of books in the collection concern presidents' wives. This leaves the impression that the women's claim to fame was the fact that they married a famous man (Harvey-Slager, 1992).

The middle school was opened in 1972 which influenced the numbers of biographies purchased with 60's and 70's copyright dates. A committment to building a balanced collection would certainly have been a priority in opening a new facility, thus biographies would have recieved a fair share of the budget. Chapter II funds were available to help purchase the original collection according the funding notations recorded in each volume. The supply of federal money for libraries was more plentiful during those years as compared to recent years (Harvey-Slager, 1992).

In comparing the number of male and female biographies purchased in a given decade at both locations studied, a proven lack of female biographies emerges. A strong indication of a severe lack of female biographies appears in the literature. A study done by Harvey-Slager (1992) also supports this postion. The problem is worth additional consideration.

The small sample, one middle school library media center and one community library, in this study makes the probability of generalization to a larger population weak. Other studies in other locations and with larger populations would enhance the data collected here and in the Harvey-slager study. Further studies should look at the number of

women's biographies published in any given year to define the available volumes. This could affect the number purchased. Another study could examine the role of prejudice in selecting and purchasing biographies. Does the gender and race of the person responsible for selecting and purchasing affect the number of female and minority volumes reaching the shelves of the library? This should be done with a fairly large sample to lend more validity to the data.

Circulation records should be studied to see who is reading the biographies. Are girls reading about girls? Are boys reading about boys? Who chooses the biographies that are read? Do the students choose to read biographies on their own or is this genre chosen only when an assignment is made? Once students are introduced to biographies, does this catagory then continue to be incorporated in the voluntary reading choices? And does the copyright date of the book affect the selection of the book for reading?

Applications

Applying the knowledge revealed in this study in the area of collection development is mandatory. While biographies of good quality written

about women in the decades before the 80's should be retained, careful weeding and selection of books written more recently is a must. If available from the publishers, an effort must be made to include all minority groups.

Librarians responsible for purchasing must demand from publishers good quality in women's biographies, as well as equity in gender and culture. The push for multiculturalism in education and the celebration of Black History Month has forced a new focus on biographies from the point of view of the media specialist and the classroom teacher. However, publishers are disguising some to the same old tired biographees as new multicultural material. Careful attention to selection is critical. Ordinary women with ordinary lives, as well as new names need to be made available by publishers of educational materials.

The focus on multiculturalism and black history has also provided a hook to bring the teachers into collabrative planning with the media specialist. Planning units and encouraging resource based instruction is the perfect opportunity to use women's biographies to fill the large gaps in the textbooks regarding women and minorities. In fact, not only are women

being omitted from the textbooks, the study of American history is being seriously curtailed in the educational curriculum. Yet another reason to provide good quality biographies of a broad spectrum of biographees.

The documented loss of self-esteem by females in the middle grades can, according the the literature, be greatly lessened or avoided altogether by providing generous numbers of strong, positive role models. Biography is the genre of choice in accomplishing these important goals.

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